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22 June 1955

FRANC-TIREUR'S EDITORIAL POSITION, 22 MAY - 12 JUNE 1955

Franc-Tireur, liberal, leftist, non-Communist French newspaper claiming a circulation of 136,000, sees some increased hope for the future of Europe in the recent Yugoslav-USSR meeting, the forthcoming Four-Power Summit Conference and the recent Russian approach to West Germany.

The paper's editorials between 22 May and 12 June 1955 were highly critical of Moscow Communism at some points, but did appear to feel that the USSR's recent change in policy might bring some positive gains. Some wishful thinking seems indicated by its statement that the Belgrade Accord "consolidated peace" in Europe and holds hope for improved relations between the US and the USSR. And although Franc-Tireur supports WEU, it said it felt that the West and Germany would not refuse reunification much longer, even at the price of a neutral Germany.

Among other points, Franc-Tireur held that the Soviet recognition of the right of a state to develop its own separate form of socialism was a gain. It favored Adenauer's acceptance of the Soviet invitation to Moscow before the Summit Conference, as an opportunity to learn Soviet intentions. It suggested that Khrushchev's presence would facilitate negotiations at that conference.

Franc-Tireur's editorial position in the past has been pro-Western and anti-Soviet, although it is considered an independent paper. In general it is friendly to United States policy, although not a rabid supporter of the US position. It has supported NATO and WEU, but like other French newspapers opposed EDC. While not an organ of a political party, it is socialist in orientation. On French affairs, Franc-Tireur has been especially critical of the policy in North Africa.

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1. Tito-Krushchev Meeting

Despite its lengthy sarcastic comments on the Soviets' volte-face on Tito, Franc-Tireur held that the Russian gesture to Yugoslavia does hold an excellent augury for countries whose relations with the USSR are not normal--by implication the United States. It saw in the Belgrade meeting between Tito and Krushchev more than a mere tactic aimed at bringing Tito back into the fold, even going so far as to say that the accord signed by Tito and Bulganin consolidated peace in Europe.

However, Franc-Tireur saw through the joint condemnation of military blocs, declaring that alone the condemnation could be termed a victory for Tito, but that the fact that Bulganin signed it, and the use of the plural in the statement, indicated that the USSR does not consider itself one of the military blocs.

The paper's comments on Tito's improved position as a result of Soviet recognition were in line with its independent socialist point of view. It declared the Belgrade Accord was a tribute to Tito's courage in defying Moscow since the 1948 break in Soviet-Yugoslav relations and pointed out that the split had permitted the development of a more democratic and less static state, notably in the economic and social spheres. It hailed the meeting as one between state and state and as a collaboration based on equality--a Soviet recognition of past blunders and recognition of Yugoslav independence and the right of each state to develop its own socialism even if at variance with the Moscow-Cominform variety.

Franc-Tireur did express some skepticism as to the extent of this change in Soviet policy, saying that whether the USSR will allow Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to develop their own forms of socialism remains to be seen. However, it felt that the Belgrade Declaration will have wide impact on the Satellites.

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While Franc-Tireur termed Tito's joining in demands for a UN seat for Red China and for Formosa's return to the Peiping regime a success for the USSR, it emphasized that "an exchange of socialist experiences" is far from ideological alignment of Yugoslavia with the USSR. It felt that Yugoslavia had retained its independence, making the Soviet delegation aware that the Yugoslav Communist Party desired to maintain fraternal relations with Western socialist parties, which the Kremlin regards as traitors.

The paper took the opportunity offered by the Soviets' asking pardon for the so-called errors of Beria to criticize Communist principles, declaring that the Communist concept of truth is relative. It charged that the leadership principle is the supreme law for the Communists and what the leader says is always right, whether he be called Stalin, Beria, Malenkov or Krushchev. It ridiculed the French Communist paper L'Humanite for its switch from its 1950 denunciation of the Tito regime as "a Joseph Broz-Gesellschaft" similar to a "Herman Goering Gesellschaft" to its 1955 friendship for Tito. It asked if the future might not bring vindication for even the victims of the Soviet purges and the October Revolution.

2. Summit Conference

Franc-Tireur's only editorial between 22 May and 12 June on the July Four-Power Summit Conference at Geneva was comment that Krushchev's presence at the conference would be extremely helpful in permitting decisions to be reached quickly.

The paper said that President Eisenhower, head of his party and government, and surrounded by advisers, will not have to consult Washington before making decisions. And if both Krushchev, first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, and Bulganin, premier of the Soviet Government, attend the conference they will be able to avoid the delay of consultations with Moscow.

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Franc-Tireur, like other Western newspapers, saw indications that Krushchev actually wielded the power in Russia in his alighting first from the airplane at Belgrade, making the first speech and taking the most prominent position in the Soviet delegation on all formal occasions.

3. Adenauer

Franc-Tireur favored the Soviet proposal that West German Chancellor Adenauer visit Moscow before the Summit Conference, as an opportunity for the Western powers to learn Soviet intentions, if not proposals.

It held that Western policies toward West Germany have had a tremendous effect on Soviet policy, but that the West and Germany will eventually accept reunification and evacuation for Germany, even at the price of a neutral Germany.

The paper declared that the Soviet invitation, following close upon the West's recognition of the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany and the naming of the West German ministers of foreign affairs and defense, was significant proof of the efficacy of West Germany's integration into WEU. But it felt that the USSR will find it necessary to defend its recognition of the Bonn Government to the East German Communist leaders.

Franc-Tireur did not expect the USSR to propose anything not contained in its note on the Summit Conference, but said that the West should be prepared to meet any Soviet tactic on Germany.

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